

# WOMONSPACE

The voice of Womonspace to the lesbian community of Edmonton



SOJOURNER  
TRUTH

NEWS

June 84  
Vol. 2  
No. 6



We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.

"O! dreadful is the check -  
intense the agony  
When the ear begins to hear  
and the eye begins to see;  
When the pulse begins to throb,  
the brain to think again;  
The soul to feel the flesh,  
and the flesh to feel the chain."

Emily Brontë wrote those words a very long time ago. She and her sisters were attempting to actualize their creative potential at a time when womyn's only potential was to complete 'finishing school' and become either a marvellous hostess or a silent appendage of her husband. Their literature has survived however, and remains as vivid testimonies to the incredible suffocation womyn laboured under at that time. We can only speculate about the kind of accomplishments the Brontë's and many other womyn would have made had society been different.

But I feel the agony expressed in this poem can still give us a very important message today; and I would like to discuss some of my thoughts over the last few months about Womonspace and the newsletter and how they do eventually relate back to the message in Ms. Brontë's words.

Womonspace is the only 'avowed' lesbian organization in Edmonton. There are many other gay and non-lesbian womyn's groups where lesbians are welcome, but Womonspace is the only group that has not only lesbians, but lesbianism as its reason for being. We are together as a group because we are all lesbians and that is it. We share no political beliefs, no economic or educational background, no religious or spiritual commitments; we are simply a group of womyn with the same sexual preference or choice.

And considering the wide variety of backgrounds, beliefs and commitments that do exist and that could possibly present problems, it is more than obvious that a lot of hard work and dedication has gone into making and maintaining Womonspace. And it has been, and probably will continue to be very successful. However, just as it is unrealistic to expect that one womyn could possibly meet 100 percent of all the needs of another womyn all the time, so is it unrealistic to expect that one organization can meet all the needs and expectations of any given community. Particularly, a diverse community such as ours, where many of our needs and priorities overlap with so many others. For example, as lesbians, we share our oppression with gay men who also suffer because of a supposedly 'deviant' sexual preference. However, as womyn, we share a primary bond with non-lesbian womyn who also live in a world where it is not only difficult, but outright dangerous to be female. Handicapped lesbians, non-English speaking and immigrant lesbians, Black lesbians, Native lesbians, single lesbian mothers, etc, can extend those boundaries again even farther as their specific needs differ with those of the white, middle-class, university-educated lesbian. And this awareness is not something that we should be frightened of nor is it something that we should try to ignore or deny. I feel it is one of the enriching aspects of any womyns community; our individual differences and perspectives combined with our bond as womyn can be one of our 'unconquerable' strengths. But it is naive and very patriarchal to believe that one organization can be so all-encompassing as to meet all the needs of every lesbian in the community all the time. Womonspace is doing an excellent job of meeting our social and recreational needs

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and it is unfair to assume that they can even attempt to do more. And that's okay - socializing with other lesbians is very important.

However, I feel that what we need now is something to balance that with. The originators of Womospace saw a need for womyn-only dances and they took the initiative to fill that need. But that is not the beginning or the end of it all. Womospace is not a feminist organization, nor does it profess to be. It is important, however, to consider the political implications of organizing around an issue such as lesbianism. Any group of womyn functioning economically autonomously is very significant, but if the group itself does not wish to acknowledge or act upon that, then the importance of the statement is temporarily lost.

But, as lesbians and as womyn, do we not have an obligation to challenge the attitudes and structures that are impacting upon us? Is it possible to do that from within an organization that cannot acknowledge or recognize the primary oppression we experience as womyn, which makes it virtually impossible to live as lesbians without collectively segregating ourselves? And is it worthwhile to remain within that organization and attempt to educate about the real source of our oppression when it might be more beneficial to recognize the liberalistic structure and pull out? (For a clear distinction between 'being a liberal' and 'being liberalistic' or subscribing to liberalism, please see Zilliah Eisenstein's The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism. I am using the term liberalism, with its emphasis on personal freedom and social equality, to describe white, middle-class ideology which is often based on the philosophy that all individuals irregardless of race, sex, economic and social class have

equal opportunity and simply have to apply hard work and initiative to achieve "life, liberty, and happiness".)

You're probably asking yourself (if you are still reading) "What has this got to do with me or with WOMONSPACE NEWS?" Well, that is a very valid question. As I said earlier, I wanted to discuss some of the thoughts I've had about my participation in Womospace and WOMONSPACE NEWS; I'm also hoping to generate some discussion about the points I've mentioned in this editorial. It is absolutely vital that we stop pretending that differences don't exist amongst us. Those differences don't have to be earth-shattering, they can be very valuable and very enriching. But I suppose my final questions to you are, Does lesbian-feminism have a place in Womospace and if so, how do we define 'lesbian-feminism'? If not, can a lesbian-feminist work within a right-wing organization that 1) refuses to recognize the politicalness of its actions, and 2) that won't or cannot see how issues such as violence against womyn and children, pornography, sexual harrassment, sexual violations within the home and on the street, affect our lives as lesbians as much as our lives as womyn? Can we then, successfully combine the principles of feminism with the principles of liberalism? I have no answers at the moment for these questions and I feel I have to find them before I can continue working on this newsletter or organization.

Now, if you are still reading at this point, you are most definitely going to be asking yourself, "What does any of this have to do with Emily Brontë?" Well, in her poem she writes of the pain she experienced when she began to see through the lies and finally realized how womyn were bound by restrictions and

limitations deemed appropriate for their sex. She wrote those words over a century ago, but we today are still organizing in every aspect of our lives to free ourselves from those same chains. My point, I suppose, is that I feel it is just a matter of priorities; are the chains that bind our ankles today and prevent us from choosing whom we want to dance and celebrate our lives with, more painful than those that still restrict our right as womyn to choose in the first place?

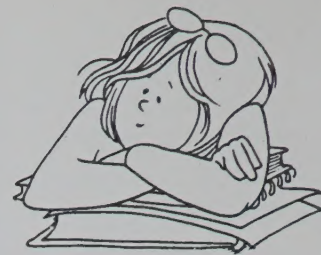
For me, the answer is no. It is far more important to work towards eliminating the structure that dictates to womyn what we can and cannot do. When each one of us can freely choose to walk down a dark alley alone at 3:00 am. in the morning without fearing for our life, then we all will have cause to truly celebrate. For then, we could choose to do anything!

*Jean Noble*

Jean Noble



(P.S. Keep those questionnaires and letters rolling in!! We need to know what you think!)



## Letters to the Editor~

Womonspace Womyn -  
(or maybe, dear editor:)

This is a good opportunity for me to do something which I've planned for a long time, but keep putting off, which is to write a supportive letter to the editor. Having been involved in many womyn's groups and communities over the years, from B.C. to N.B., I have much praise for Womonspace in particular, and the lesbian community as I have so far experienced it in Edmonton.

There is a cohesiveness and general support of each other that I've not found in other places, big or small. Political infighting seems to be minimal, if not almost non-existent. That in itself is something. Arriving in Edmonton from 3000 miles away, knowing not a soul, I have been given consistent support, acceptance and an enthusiastic reception. It may seem like simple things, but when it's not there, it can surely be alienating.

The WOMONSPACE NEWS is a treat. Do womyn here know how hard it is in other places to get something together that is half as good? I find Jean's editorials to be consistently astute, thought-provoking and well done.

So this is a vote of confidence from me to Womonspace and the lesbian community in Edmonton.

Love,  
Jude



## COMMON WOMAN BOOKS

*Alberta's Only Feminist Bookstore*

non-sexist children's books  
records \* jewelry \* t-shirts  
fiction \* feminist theory  
overcoming male & female stereotypes  
a good selection of lesbian literature

Tuesday & Wednesday: 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Thursday & Friday: 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

8208 - 104 Street 432-9344

### CHOOSING TO HAVE A CHILD

When it seems the fetus has the complete control of my body, when I'm crying because the baby's demands are too many, and when I'm exhausted from lack of sleep, will I be sorry? Will I resent the years spent with the constant responsibility for another one's life? When money is tight and when it seems the whole world disapproves and when my child comes home in tears because Mom's a dyke, will I have regrets? And then when I'm facing my teenager's accusations of being deprived of a father, will I be strong enough?

I will find the strength. I will be a mother. The need fills my whole being - warmly, urgently, joyously. And I've waited long enough.

Lindy

### CHILD CARE

Volunteers are needed for short shifts taking care of and organizing games for children who are attending the GALA picnic at Rundle Park on June 24. Give the mums a break - leave your name and number on the Womospace line, 488-2918.



Women's Counselling  
Services of Edmonton

Ardelle L. Dudley

R.R. 1, Fort Saskatchewan,  
Alberta, Canada T8L 2N7

Telephone:  
(403) 998-1740

## HOW WE DEAL WITH OUR DIFFERENCES

How we deal with our differences is going to determine the quality of Womonspace, and the quality of our experiences and relationships within Womonspace for years to come. First, we must decide whether or not we will deal with our differences AT ALL. We have been taught to hide differences, that the differences between us and straight people can destroy us, and we have been invisible to others because of our differences. Many of us come to Womonspace thinking "Whew, what a relief, now there won't be any differences between me and the rest of the group; finally I'm in a group of all lesbians!" While it is an exciting prospect to be in a group of all lesbians, we must remember that we are not a homogenous group and there will always be differences among us. We must not ourselves fall for the biggest stereotype that Womonspace is committed to striving against--that all lesbians are THE SAME. And you can tell one a mile away in a thick fog, and especially, know what she thinks about everything. It isn't a very big step to reject one NEGATIVE stereotype to take on the exactly opposite POSITIVE stereotype: that all lesbians are wonderfully athletic, believe the same wonderful things, and are always psychic about what other lesbians are thinking, especially the one that never say anything.

Yes, on some level we can heave a sigh of relief and be ourselves in Womonspace more than elsewhere. But we must not act on the expectation that there won't be any differences between us. We feel hurt

and betrayed when small disagreements arise, even though we know that between the closest of womyn friends there are differences that have to be dealt with. Preferably openly and positively, maybe even joyfully and with humour. When we have respect, for each other as well as ourselves, it is not so very hard to find the patience and strength we need to work fruitfully with each other. Being willing to explain things carefully, to take the time to really listen to each other. To find out where our differences are really coming from, resolve some, and try to work amicably with the rest.

Because we are proud lesbians, we sometimes take a 'Don't Tread On Me' stance, even with the womyn we are closest to. I don't know of any lesbian who doesn't have some scars and who isn't extra-sensitive because of it at times. Like coming out, being able to state "I differ from you on this issue, and let me tell you why" takes guts. But also like coming out, it gets easier with practice.

I really enjoy working in Womonspace. I need to say all these things because I have seen the incredible cost that badly-handled conflict has had in several other groups. People and organizations have been severely damaged for years, over things that started as small irritations. Impatience leading to heavy-handedness and ass-kicking, totally forgetting the reason the group was together in the first place. God, I don't want to go through any of those things again! I see Womonspace's main function as community-building.

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We must remember this when we are doing all those short-term tasks, especially when we start getting impatient or angry with each other. Community-building is never an 'add water and stir' process, but must be by definition a long-term, bit-by-bit process. To me it means that we listen to each other and work as cooperatively as possible, taking the time for consensus-type decision making. Sometimes our commitment to educate ourselves and listen to each other means some meetings will run a bit longer. That's life. As Marge Piercy (author of "Woman on the Edge of Time") says, "If in our struggle to change the outside world we do not change ourselves, we might as well be playing with blocks." These changes take time, and the willingness to struggle with each other in a caring way.

Laura Lee



Illustration by Heather Graham

EVERY  
WEDNESDAY  
\* NIGHT

8:00 → 1:00  
FEMALE D.J.

woman's \* night

\* AT THE \*

ROOST 10345 104ST

NO COVER CHARGE



glasbergen

"Yesterday . . . all my self-improvements seemed so far away . . .  
now it looks as though they're here to stay . . ."

June is the month for coming out of the closets we've been hibernating in all winter, and how better to get into the spirit of summer than by enjoying the events planned for Gay and Lesbian Awareness week?

The organizing committee has written to the mayor and council to request the declaration of June 27 as Gay and Lesbian Awareness day in Edmonton. This would commemorate the Stonewall Inn riots of 1969 which were the symbolic beginning of the gay pride movement in North America. See a copy of the letter elsewhere in this issue and stay tuned to see whether the council sees fit to grant our request!

In addition to our regular monthly DANCE at Hazeldean on June 16, Womospace will host a WINE AND CHEESE PARTY on June 21 to launch the week. This will take place at our regular Thursday night drop-in at E.W.P. from 7 pm. Admission is free and you're sure to meet a new Lesbian or two. Bring a friend!

GATE is having an OPEN HOUSE on Saturday, June 23 from 7 to 10 pm. This is your chance to drop in at 10173 - 104 Street and get (re)acquainted with an important organization in Edmonton. If you can't make it Saturday, the OPEN HOUSE continues every night except Sunday until June 29.

Sunny Sunday June 24 is PICNIC day at RUNDLE PARK. (2902 - 113 Ave. Turn right at 31 St. and 118 Ave.) We've reserved picnic area #8 and a ball diamond, from noon to 9 pm. This is a family event with sporting events, games, a special Children's Concert by V. Lynne Weeds and an ecumenical church service. Free admission, bring your own picnic supper. Day care provided. (We still need volunteers - leave a name and phone number at 488-2918) You can get to Rundle Park on buses 20 and 28 from the Coliseum LRT station.

The PUBLIC FORUM AND DISCUSSION on Monday, June 25 promises to be

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most interesting. You can choose between "Pornography: A Gay Perspective" with the outspoken Christine Bearchell, columnist for The Body Politic, being the keynote speaker, or "The Church, The State And Civil Rights" introduced by United Church minister Rev. Bill Phipps. No admission charge; 7:30 pm at St. Stephen's College, 88 Ave. and 112 St.

Tuesday night is your chance to rest up for the approaching events and to brush up your Italian... or else to create your own "pride" celebration.

Wednesday is FILM NIGHT. We have scheduled the Italian film "Basilios Quartet" (which has English subtitles for those of you who were busy on Tuesday). Why not stay for a drink afterwards in the Intermission Restaurant? Zeidler Hall, Citadel Theatre, 7:15 pm.

ART APPRECIATION NIGHT is Thursday June 28, at Flashback - 10330-104 St. ART SHOW and BUFFET from 6 to 10 pm, followed by DANCING. Art works by professionals, amateurs and students. AWARD for the most original work and even a DOOR PRIZE! for only \$4.00. All womyn artists who would like to exhibit are asked to phone Vincent at 482-5105.

EVERYBODY LOVES FRIDAY! Gala dance is co-sponsored by GATE and Womospace. Hazeldean Hall (where else?). Advance ticket purchase is recommended; available at the June Womospace meeting or June drop-ins. Free admission to those who volunteer two hours of work: leave a message for Lorna or Liz at 488-2918. DOOR PRIZES, DANCING, MUSIC AND OTHER GOOD STUFF.

As you can see, there's something for everyone in this year's celebrations. Edmonton lesbian and gay organizations which have been working on plans include Dignity, Edmonton Roughnecks, GATE, Metropolitan Community Church, the Vocal Minority and YOUR organization, Womospace.

L.J.B.





**GAY AND LESBIAN AWARENESS 1984** • BOX 53 • EDMONTON •  
ALBERTA • T5J 2G9 • TELEPHONE • (403) **488-3009** • **424-8361**  
(G.A.T.E.) • **488-2918** (WOMONSPACE)

*Gala 84*

May 8, 1984

The Mayor and Council  
The City of Edmonton  
1 Sir Winston Churchill Square  
Edmonton, Alberta

Dear Mayor Decore:

Gay and Lesbian Pride Day falls on June 27 of each year. This year in Edmonton the day will be part of a week-long celebration.

This celebration, known as G.A.L.A. '84 (Gay and Lesbian Awareness) is being organized by a steering committee of members of our community. It will include a public forum, an art appreciation night, a concert, a dance, a picnic and sports day, a film night, and an ecumenical service. These events will be open to all citizens of Edmonton.

This past year has seen an important effort in Alberta to combat bigotry and discrimination. Unfortunately, the effort has been concerned solely with visible minority groups, and has excluded lesbian and gay people--members of a less-visible minority.

We wish to request that the City of Edmonton declare June 27, 1984, to be Gay and Lesbian Awareness Day. We would like to appear before the appropriate committee to further explain why we feel official designation of such a day is important.

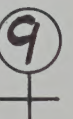
Roughly 50,000 gay and lesbian Edmontonians want to believe that Alberta is indeed for all of us.

We thank Council and yourself for your consideration of this matter!

Sincerely,

John Doyle      Elizabeth Massiah  
G.A.L.A. '84 Steering Committee

JD/EM/w1




### CONTRACTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

The workshop on Contracts and Relationships was held on Sunday, May 6 and presented by Jane MacPherson, lawyer, and Joy Muller, psychologist. Some good discussion and very useful information came out of it. For example:

- \*In child custody cases, having good expert witnesses on your side is very important.
- \*Wills should be drawn up, especially by lesbians, or the surviving lover may not be entitled to receive property, and the biological family may be beneficiaries of the estate. If you have any property which you wish to go to your lover, take the proper steps to protect her before death. Go and see a lawyer and have a will drawn up while you are able to do so. Explain to the lawyer your situation and have the lawyer ensure your "capacity" to draw up a will. This may involve a visit to a psychologist or psychiatrist to document your mental/emotional fitness to draw up a will.
- \*Should you separate from your lover, you may want to consider changing the beneficiary of your will or any insurance policies, to reflect your current status.
- \*It is a good idea to talk to your family about your will so they will not be so surprised when your will is read, and they may be less likely to take your lover to court after your death. This explanation will lessen the stress on all survivors.
- \*Property and all major purchases should be held as "joint tenants" so that if one dies the property will pass to the other. Otherwise if property is held in another way, the

# GATE

GAY ALLIANCE TOWARD EQUALITY



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10173-104 St. EDMONTON (403)424-8361

- DROP-IN CENTRE
- PEER COUNSELLING
- SPEAKERS' BUREAU
- CIVIL RIGHTS
- SOCIAL EVENTS
- LIBRARY

deceased's half of the property may revert to her biological family. The survivor is then in the difficult position of having to deal with the deceased's family.

\*If there is a property dispute upon separation, there is an Alberta Family Mediation Society. Mediation may be less expensive than court, and may involve much less emotional cost in the long run, as most can settle amicably.

If you have any legal questions, see a lawyer. This workshop can be run again if enough interest is shown.

Laura Lee

# Activities



## WOMONSPACE and WOMONSPACE NEWS

Womospace is its members. You are Womospace. Your participation directs what happens in the group. If you say nothing and do nothing, who do you think is going to represent your point of view and ensure that your needs are met?

This newsletter is put together by Womospace members. Contributions of interest to lesbian women are also welcome from non-members. Mail your submissions to: WOMONSPACE NEWS, c/o E.W.P., 9926 - 112 St, Edmonton T5K 1L7.

## PERSONAL ADS

If you have something to buy, sell or trade, or if you are trying to find or rent out an apartment, etc., you may advertise free of charge in WOMONSPACE NEWS. All submissions should be delivered to us c/o E.W.P. by the 10th of each month to appear in the next month's newsletter.

Womospace reserves the right to refuse an ad for any reason.

## REFERRALS

Womospace is currently establishing a system of referrals to lesbian-positive service people, such as: lawyers, psychologists, doctors, and other service people. If you know anyone who you think should be on this list, please call Laura at 429-2355.

## DIRECTIONS/PR/WOMYN'S ISSUES MEETING

There will be a meeting of the Directions/PR/Womyn's Issues Committee at 5:30 on Monday June 4 at Linda's, 11128 - 125 St. Everyone welcome.

love is...



Kiw

... Doing volunteer work.

## DANCE

Good times are to be found at Hazeldean Hall, 9630 - 66 Ave. on June 16 from 8 pm to 1 am. A hot and cold buffet will be served. Admission is \$5.00 for members and \$7.00 for non-members.

## LESBIAN DROP-IN

Every Thursday night at Every Woman's Place (9926-112 St.) from 7 - 9 pm. All are welcome! A special wine and cheese drop-in will take place on the 21st of June to kick off Gay and Lesbian Awareness week.

# WOMONSPACE DANCE



HAZELDEAN HALL ~ 9630-66 AVENUE

get  
dancin'

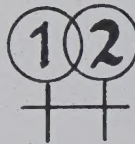


June 16

ADMISSION: \$7.00

MEMBERS: \$5.00

HOT & COLD BUFFET  
8:00 P.M. TO 1:00 A.M.




**PLEASE NOTE:**

Articles published in *Womonspace News* do not necessarily reflect the policies and opinions of *Womonspace*.

Credits: Jean, Lindy, L.J.B., Laura, L.K.R.

**WOMONSPACE NEWS** is published monthly by *Womonspace Social and Recreational Society of Edmonton*. *Womonspace* is a non-profit, social, recreational and educational organization for lesbians in Edmonton. Mailing address:

 488-2918

**'WOMONSPACE NEWS'**  
c/o Every Woman's Place  
9925 - 112 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta, T5K 1L7